

ROBERT E. LATTA  
5TH DISTRICT, OHIO

ASSISTANT MAJORITY WHIP

VICE CHAIRMAN  
CONGRESSIONAL SPORTSMEN'S CAUCUS

COMMITTEE ON  
ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH

SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
ENVIRONMENT AND THE ECONOMY

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
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June 6, 2012

**0707**

The Honorable Julius Genachowski  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski,

Our economy runs on an instantaneous nationwide telecommunications system, and I appreciate your commitment to ensuring that this network remains the fastest and most reliable in the world. This is a critical matter for every segment of our society, from the most urban to the most rural areas.

As you may recall, over the past year, we have corresponded about the issue of call completion in rural areas. I began hearing of this issue in April 2011 and the problem only exacerbated in my rural, northern Ohio district into the summer and fall. Local exchange carriers were reporting frequent incidences of customers – individuals and small businesses – not receiving phone calls.

Your attention to this serious matter is greatly appreciated, and I was encouraged by the establishment of the FCC's Rural Call Completion Task Force in October 2011 which was tasked with examining the problem of phone calls being terminated in rural areas. The declaratory ruling clarifying the scope of the commission's prohibition on blocking, choking, reducing or restricting telephone traffic in February 2012 was an important step in the direction of addressing the problem of rural call non-completion.

While I am pleased to have heard from one company in my district that they have experienced positive developments in regard to call completion, I am concerned with the overall findings of an industry call completion test project. The project conducted by the National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA), the National Telecommunications Cooperative Association (NTCA), the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO), and the Western Telecommunications Alliance (WTA) found that rural consumers continue to encounter significant problems receiving calls. The study reported that nearly a third of rural test lines experienced completion problems on more than 20% of incoming calls.

In light of this industry report, I ask that you continue to examine this problem and provide me with an update as to the status of the Rural Call Completion Task Force. Please follow-up with either me or my staff member, Bethany Goodman, at (202) 225-6405.

Businesses depend on the quality and completion of every single phone call. During this economic downturn, many small businesses operate on a small margin, and one incomplete call that results in a business transaction not being made, can be critical. Furthermore, incomplete calls adversely affect families and public safety, and can even be life-threatening. Your attention to this matter is critical to the telecommunications infrastructure in rural Ohio. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert E. Latta", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert E. Latta  
Member of Congress

REL/bag



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

JULIUS GENACHOWSKI  
CHAIRMAN

January 24, 2013

The Honorable Robert E. Latta  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1323 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Latta:

Thank you for your letter regarding the problem of call completion in rural areas. The consequences of call completion and service quality problems can be dire, impacting families and businesses alike. I continue to be particularly concerned about adverse effects on the availability of reliable telephone service to consumers, businesses, and public health and safety officials in rural America.

The NECA test project that you reference in your letter shows that overall completion and quality problems have improved since last year, but as you note, problems remain. Commission action in this area is continuing on multiple fronts, including working with our partners in state commissions to understand and reduce the problem, increasing coordination with the Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions (ATIS), and investigating carrier practices. These investigations have revealed how complicated this issue is, and how hard it can be to identify the responsible parties. But I remain fully committed to seeing them through and holding the appropriate parties responsible. The Commission's Rural Call Completion Task Force established an email box for rural providers to alert the Commission on a real-time basis about call completion problems. The Task Force also created a website (<http://xrl.us/bm8fke>) that focuses on the rural call completion problem and instructs consumers on how to file complaints with the Commission.

Information provided through these sources is assisting the Commission in active investigations. The Declaratory Ruling that the Commission's Wireline Competition Bureau issued in February 2012, reminds carriers of their responsibilities and potential liability if they engage in, or use underlying providers that engage in, practices prohibited by the Communications Act or Commission rules. Appropriate action will be taken against any violation of the Act or Commission rules.

I appreciate your concern and will keep your office informed of developments on the matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. Genachowski", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "J" and a long horizontal stroke.

Julius Genachowski